



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

INSIDE TRACKS

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Winter 1998

FWP commission Adopts Brow-tined Bull Season for Region 1

The Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Commission made sweeping changes in northwest Montana hunting regulations for 1998 at their recent meeting in Helena. The changes were prompted by the status of deer and elk populations and by a large amount of public comment from concerned hunters. In the most significant change, the Commission adopted a brow-tined bull only season for elk in northwest Montana. Cow elk harvest will be by permits awarded through a drawing.

Here is a summary of changes in hunting regulations for 1998.

Elk: The Commission adopted the brow-tined bull elk season based on the public input received over the past months on the issue, and in an effort to improve the quality of elk hunting.

Cow permit numbers will be established in August, after results of biological surveys are analyzed. Exceptions to the new regulation will be for the early hunt in Hunting District 150/151, the Bob Marshall Wilderness, where there will be a first week (September 15-21) either sex season; and Hunting District 170 (Flathead River bottom) which will be either sex all season.

Deer: Hunting for white-tailed and mule deer in northwest Montana will be buck only for the 1998 season, with 200 antlerless permits available for 12-14 year-old hunters. The Commission adopted the buck only season because of lower deer populations and public comment. The youth permits will provide better opportunity for

young hunters during a year when deer are not expected to be abundant. Wildlife Manager Harvey Nyberg says that the 200 permits spread over an 11,000 square-mile area will not affect the overall deer population. Archery hunting will be buck only as well. Hunting District 170 (Flathead River bottom) will remain either-sex and one antlerless B-Tag will be available per hunter. Also, the Commission adopted the statewide buck management policy; the policy will be reviewed every two years.

Black Bear: The Commission adopted a license purchase cutoff date of April 14 for the spring season and August 31 for the fall season. Cutoff dates should reduce the incidental tak- (Cont. on Page 2)



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CAN YOU SPOT ANY? The FWP Commission adopted a brow-tined bull season for northwest Montana. How many brow-tined bulls are there in this photo?

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Commission Adopts Brow-tined Bull Season

(Cont. from Page 1)

ing of young bears and the illegal taking of bears by people who would harvest a bear then buy a license. In addition, a hide tag was approved to increase compliance with mandatory bear skull examination and to clear up the tagging requirements of hide and carcass. The hide tag will be free of charge.



SOME YOUNG HUNTERS will be the exception to the first buck-only season for deer in at least 40 years. Youngsters will be able to apply for 200 antlerless permits.

Mountain Lion: The Region One general season lion hunt was retained but was not expanded statewide and will not include the archery season; the hunt will begin with the general rifle deer/elk season. Commissioners were concerned that expansion of the season might put too much pressure on lactating female lions. As in 1997, general season hunters will be allowed up to 20 percent of the quota in each hunting district. The lion chase season end-date was moved back to April 15 to avoid houndsmen and bear hunter conflicts with the start of spring black bear season.

Moose/Sheep/Goat: The Commission reduced moose quotas in all Region One districts by 20 percent because of low moose populations. Final quota adjustments will be made in May.

Upland Bird: Hunter orange requirement for upland bird hunters was

not adopted as a regulation by the Commission, but its use was recommended as a safety measure.

Technology Issues: The Commissioners took major steps to eliminate what they considered unethical aids to hunting.

—**Two-Way Electronic Communications** for pursuing game were banned; this ban does not include communications relative to safety or other purposes while hunting. Also, for the purpose of this regulation, lion hunting will be considered to begin when hunters and hounds begin following lion tracks.

—**Airplane Spotting** and hunting during the same hunting day was banned.

—**Night Vision Optics** were banned for use in hunting; this regulation does not include red-dot scopes.

All of these changes will be reflected in the new regulations which will be available at all FWP offices and hunting/fishing license agents by March.

Commissioner Charlie Decker of Libby noted that a tremendous quantity and quality of public comments helped guide the Commissioners as they made decisions on these changes. More than 450 people attended the regulations hearing on January 10 in Kalispell, and hundreds of people also submitted written comments. Other local meetings around northwest Montana were also well attended. As always, Commissioner Decker extends thanks

to everyone who participated in the regulations setting process.

Special Regulations for Bull Elk

Montana has some elk hunting districts with special regulations governing the type of bull elk that is legal. The diagrams below are intended to assist the sportsmen in interpreting these special regulations.

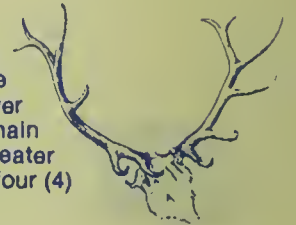
SPIKE BULL

Any elk having antlers which do not branch, or if branched, branch is less than four inches long measured from the main antler.



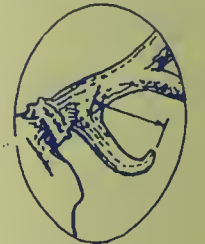
BROW-TINED

Any elk having an antler or antlers with a visible point on the lower half of either main beam that is greater than or equal to four (4) inches long.



ANTLER POINT MEASUREMENT

Legal antler point must be 4 inches or more in length.



THE FWP COMMISSION adopted the Citizen Black Bear Committee's recommendations to require hunters to purchase a bear license prior to the start of the season and to add a no-fee hide tag.

Catch and Release Regulations Adopted for the Flathead

Catch and release fishing for cutthroat trout will be the rule for much of the Flathead River system in a major change adopted for 1998 by the FWP Commission. The regulation will apply to Flathead Lake, the Flathead River, and portions of its forks.

This and other regulation changes, adopted by the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Commission for Region 1 last November, will be in effect March 1, 1998 through February 28, 2000 (other changes could be adopted for 1999). Refer to the 1998-99 fishing regulation booklet, available March 1 at all FWP offices and license agents, for the complete regulations.

Here is a summary of the 1998/99 fishing regulations changes:

Snagging: All waters closed to snagging except: portions of Tobacco River, Grave and Lake creeks, and two sections of the Kootenai River.

Fish Spearing: All waters closed to spearing except:

A. Northern pike spearing through the ice only: Upper Thompson Lake added and Blanchard Lake spearing eliminated.

B. Nongame fish spearing: Horseshoe Lake (Thompson Chain of Lakes); note seasonal closure.

Bow and Arrow Fishing: closed

Bull Trout

A. Tributary mouth (and main stem) 100 yard radius spot closures, June 1 - August 30: Woodward Creek (Swan) and Callahan Creek (Kootenai) added to the list; Prospect Creek dropped from the list.

B. Year round tributary closures: Blue Sky and Clarence creeks added to the list.

C. Open 3rd Saturday in May - July 15 only; Stahl Creek closure deleted.

D. Hungry Horse Reservoir: An



FISHING REGULATIONS will be available by March 1 at all FWP offices and fishing/hunting license agents.

environmental assessment on a proposed limited bull trout fishery will be prepared. Call Region 1 (752-5501) for status.

Kokanee

A. Standard Limit exceptions: Swan and Tally lakes returned to standard limits (20).

B. Flathead season and limit exceptions deleted.

Largemouth Bass: Spawning restriction: May 15 - June 30, 1 fish daily, 22" minimum length (different limit rest of year) Loon and Little Loon lakes added.

Mountain Whitefish: Extended whitefish season and catch and release for trout (December 1 - 3rd Saturday in May) South Fork Flathead (Devil's Elbow downstream to mouth) added; Thompson and Tobacco rivers deleted.

Lake Trout: Daily limit of 10 lake trout separate from the combined trout limit (see Special Regulations for some limit exceptions).

Flathead Lake/River System Trout Limits: Flathead Lake, Flathead River, North Fork Flathead, Middle Fork Flathead (non-Wilderness), South Fork Flathead (Devil's Elbow downstream to mouth), Swan River (downstream from Swan Lake): Catch and Release for cutthroat trout; combined trout limit, 2 rainbow trout.

Large Trout Lakes: 1 trout daily, 22" minimum, artificial lures only; open April 1 - November 30 only; Woods and Notellum lakes deleted; return to standard lake seasons and limits.

Clark Fork River: Combined trout limit: 3 trout under 15 inches.

Horseshoe Lake (Thompson Chain of Lakes) Western 1/3 of lake as posted closed to angling March 1 - May 15.



FISHING FOR WESTSLOPE CUTTHROAT TROUT will be "catch and release only" on the Flathead River, portions of its forks, and Flathead Lake beginning with the 1998 fishing season. Here, a young angler shows cutthroat trout caught in the Middle Fork, one of the areas which will be catch and release beginning this year.

Citizens Advisory Members Talk about Predator Management

The peer-selected citizen advisors for FWP in northwest Montana provide comments, suggestions, and guidance on management of fish, wildlife and parks resources. Recently, the advisors discussed with FWP the issue of predator management. Their comments illustrate the cross-section of public views across the region regarding this difficult issue.



Audrey Casey

MOUNTAIN LION QUOTAS have increased steadily over the past decade. Some people believe that quotas should be further increased.



Ben Rosetto, Kalispell: "There's not much we can do about wolves right now, but we can do something about lion numbers. I'd like to see a backcountry or roadless lion permit. These backcountry cats are impacting mule deer and the lion hunters aren't getting to them. I'd also like to see FWP hold a coyote hunting seminar, similar to the one held for turkey hunting a few years ago." (756-7406)



Bruce Babcock, Kalispell: "Coyotes are an animal we aren't giving enough attention to. I really think they are taking a large share of young deer. The state should advocate really getting after coyotes; that's one species we can work with." (H. 752-0789. W. 752-4504)



Steve Hawkins, Eureka: It seems that most of the public would like to see more predators killed, especially wolves. Based on the sign I've seen, there aren't many wolves in the Eureka area but if you talk to people they think there are lots of them. If the state could manage wolves we could delist them sooner. Right now we have to wait until Idaho and Wyoming reach the required number of breeding pairs for the wolf to be delisted. People who get their game each year say little about predators. It's the hunter who don't get out and have trouble getting game who are the complainers." (296-2642)



Brent Mitchell, Kalispell: Most predation is viewed by hunters as negative. There are a lot of predators, especially up the North Fork, but the biggest predator is man; that's often overlooked.

When the number of prey is down, let's say deer, people get fired up because there's more competition. Hunters pick on 4-legged predators as well as human predators that come to their area to kill their deer. I think it's a simple case of not tolerating other predators in their area. There's got to be a realization that we can't solve everything by eliminating the competition. It's irritating to me that people complain but don't include themselves as one of the predators and source of eating up habitat." (756-30)



Warren Illi, Kalispell: There are two aspects to the predator problem. First, FWP needs to explain to the public what the situation really is. I've never seen FWP quantify the number of wolves, lions, coyotes, and

how many critters they take in a year. It would help if the public had this information. FWP seems reluctant to do this, but I think it would help the public sort out perception from reality. Second, FWP needs to show the public that they are doing something about the problem. Actions should be taken to address it, such as more harvest of predators that we can manage. (257-5703)



Terri Conner, Columbia Falls: I've lived here for 45 years and I see myself as the biggest predator. Things have changed, we've lost habitat and there are houses everywhere. We are slowly crowding out the mountain lion and black bear. We are controlling predators through regulation but we can't seem to control the rate at which we are taking land from them. Some people talk like they have wolves chasing them down and snapping at their heels; I just haven't seen evidence of many wolves. I don't feel the wolves are competing with us for deer; when it becomes a problem we may start howling more." (892-5439)



Rob Shrider, Ronan: The government has totally changed its approach to predators. We paid government hunters to eliminate wolves from the lower 48 states, now we're paying to reintroduce them. It seems that most people want to see extreme measures taken, they want to see most predators killed. I don't have anything against predators, they have a place. But if you want to do something about predator overabundance, do it in the next few years. We have a window of opportunity with the lower number of deer. We can do something about coyotes. The other predator we don't acknowledge is the family dog who's out chasing deer and other game. I believe this is a terrible problem; some of these wolf tracks people are seeing are actually dogs running in the woods." (676-3701)



Dale Sommerfield, Kalispell: "I think the whole predator issue is blown out of proportion. If we hadn't had such a tough winter and high deer mortality we wouldn't be hearing so much about it. Everyone is frustrated over the wolf issue because we can't do anything about it. If we're going to delist them, we must maintain their present numbers or more—that frustrates people. I don't think non-hunters will accept bounties again or shooting coyotes, for example, just for sport. FWP should promote trapping, that will help the situation. A lot of hunters and non-hunters want to see the predator numbers play out naturally and I think it will in the next couple of years." (752-5377)



Mike Ware, Kalispell: "I agree that people are frustrated because we can't do anything about wolves. But I think the state is just using that to avoid the issue. Another frustration is the delisting conditions for threatened and endangered species keep changing. FWP should let people know that the state's position is to delist the wolf. FWP should work harder to bring the delisting about." (756-6416)

Not pictured: Craig Phillips, Thompson Falls (837-3702); Bill Kemp, Libby (293-8109).

'Hooked on Fishing' Kids Enjoy Outings

Across northwest Montana, "Hooked on Fishing, Not Drugs" classes are enjoying the lifelong family activity of fishing and learning about the outdoors. Students have gone ice fishing at various lakes to supplement what they are learning in the classroom. More than 30 classes are now participating in this award-winning, national program.

One of the smallest Hooked on Fishing classes is located at Salmon Prairie School, near Condon. At Salmon Prairie, about a dozen students experience the quality of an old-time relationship among themselves and their teacher, Jill Maus. Parents take turns supplying home-made hot lunches. And the area around the school offers terrific opportunities for learning—the Swan River flows about 100 yards from the school's front porch.

Salmon Prairie students have participated in a number of classroom activities, including studying fish specimens and doing projects on particular

fish species. Students are enthusiastic and pose challenging questions about biology. Recently, the students raised more than six questions which stumped a fisheries biologist.

In early February, the students, teacher Jill Maus, a FWP representative and six parents went on an ice fishing outing at Van Lake, located

several miles from the school. Students helped build fishing "tip-ups" from sticks found on site, and one rainbow trout was caught using these primitive fishing sets. Students also caught several other rainbow trout using conventional fishing rods. Parents supplied an excellent hot dog and marshmallow roast. Best of all, students

experienced a family activity and learned about the biology of an area located right in their backyard.

"It was a great time," says Maus. "It got to where every student was staring down their hole and trying to catch fish swimming by. I think we started something; many of the students are going back with their families this weekend!"

The Hooked on Fishing program is gaining momentum in Montana. Evergreen teacher Judy Sander received a national science award last month for her work in getting the program started.

FIRST CATCH. *Charleen Kesterson caught the first fish of the day. Nathan Wood shares in the fun.*



THE SALMON PRAIRIE SCHOOL offers an excellent learning atmosphere for students in grades K-8. Teacher Jill Maus is in back, right. Students have been enthusiastic in their participation in Hooked on Fishing.



THE CLASS shows off three rainbow trout caught on an outing to Van Lake. Students kept at it until nearly everyone had caught a fish.

Trapper Education Class Focuses on Ethics

The Trapper Education Course held in Kalispell in mid-December attracted 50 students who heard about a host of topics from five certified instructors from around Montana. Instructors were pleased to see that about 20 of the students were youngsters from 7-16 years of age.

Students were treated to discussions on North American trapping history, how to avoid capture of non-target animals, landowner relations, and

furbearer biology. Instructors demonstrated how to make various sets for a number of furbearers. Montana Trapper Association (MTA) President Ed Hebbe III of Deer Lodge entertained the youngsters with his demonstration on effective sets for coyotes. Instructor Dennis Schutz of Stevensville demonstrated how to skin a marten, and instructor Dave Wallace of Kila skinned a muskrat for the class. Schutz also fleshed a raccoon pelt.

Instructor Gary Wilson of Kalispell brought various tanned pelts and mounds of trapping and skinning equipment for the students to handle.

The statewide Trapper Education Course is now in its fifth year and has certified about 500 students. MTA and FWP recommend that all first-time and experienced trappers take the course to improve skills and learn about trapping ethics. The course is taught by volunteer, certified instructors.



CREATING THE SET. MTA President Ed Hebbe III shows his secrets for making an effective trap set for coyotes. Students of all ages were fascinated.



SKINNING METHODS. STEVENSVILLE Instructor Dennis Schutz holds young students spellbound as he demonstrates the proper way to skin a marten.



A MATTER OF ETHICS. Kalispell Instructor Gary Wilson talks about trapping equipment and trapper ethics, important aspects of the trapping experience.



PROPER TECHNIQUE for skinning a muskrat is demonstrated by Instructor Dave Wallace as students look on. All the instructors volunteered their time to the program.

FWP Team Receives Director's Award for Excellence

A team of local Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks workers has received a 1997 Director's Award for Excellence. Sandy Heuscher, Kristy Jump, Richard Peterson, and Sue Tomas, who make up FWP Region One's Administration/Front Desk team, accepted the award in Helena earlier this winter.

The team was recognized for their excellence in serving members of the public who call or stop by the FWP Office in Kalispell. Also, area hunting/fishing license agents rely on the FWP team for help and information on all aspects of license sales.

In particular, Heuscher was recognized for her help in establishing the Montana Angling Youth Club; Jump's contributions in the areas of accounting and purchasing were noted; Peterson has established annual license agent conclaves which have been adopted statewide; and Tomas was recognized for her work in personnel and at the switch board.

The Director's Award recognizing

excellence in service is given annually to an employee or employee team in

each of the eight FWP administrative regions.



EXCELLENCE REWARDED. Kristy Jump, Richard Peterson Sue Tomas, and Sandy Heuscher received the 1997 FWP Director's Award for Excellence for their work with the public and with license agents. Region One Supervisor Dan Vincent (right, rear) helped them celebrate in Helena.



For more information on Fish, Wildlife & Parks issues, listen to:

"Northwest Outdoors,"

FWP's weekly radio show, Thursdays at 8:35 a.m.
on KGEZ, 600 AM.

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